

For Immediate Release
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**AT STATE POETRY OUT LOUD RECITATION
EVERYONE IS A WINNER**

Phoenix, Ariz. — Jordan McAlpin, a sophomore at Cactus High School, won the first prize at the Poetry Out Loud Recitation state final held April 14 at 10am at the State Capitol Old Senate Chambers. She will receive \$200 award and an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to compete for a \$20,000 college scholarship in the national finals on May 15-16. Her school will receive a \$500 stipend to purchase books for the library. The Arizona Commission on the Arts (ACA) also awarded McAlpin with signed books by Arizona poets Norman Dubie and Jeannine Savard.

ACA executive director Robert C. Booker was impressed by the caliber of all the students' efforts. "Recitation is an educational tradition that is being revived and rediscovered by these amazing students. The skills required for an excellent recitation involve much more than memorization. I believe poetry should be heard in the spoken form, where the words resonate with the power intended by the poet. Based on what I saw today, all of these fine young people are winners."

Jordan wowed the judges with her poise and intelligent interpretations. In the first round she recited "Litany" by Billy Collins, and in the second round, "Beauty" by Tony Hoagland. Zebulun Garner of La Joya Community High School came in a close second, and was awarded a signed copy of Alberto Rios' book, *The Smallest Muscle in the Body*, for which he was nominated for the National Book Award. Joining McAlpin and Garner were Nisa Cortes, Arizona Cultural Academy; Mark Jacobson, Arizona School for the Arts; Gerika Kelly, North Canyon High School; and Juliana Mahaffey, Veritas Preparatory Academy. Each student participant received a personalized certificate signed by Dana Gioia, Chair of the National Endowment on the Arts.

This event, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation, and in partnership with ACA, brought teaching artists into over 40 classrooms in the Phoenix metropolitan area to teach poetry and theatrical skills to 9-12 grade students. Dan Stone, National Initiatives Program Manager at the NEA, who was in town to attend the event, hopes that the program will spread out to eventually involve students from every school in the state.

Poetry Out Loud seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers by capitalizing on the latest trends in poetry--recitation and performance. The program builds on the resurgence of poetry as an oral art form, as seen in the slam poetry movement and the immense popularity of rap music among youth. *Poetry Out Loud* invites the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theater into the English class. Through *Poetry Out Loud*, students can master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

About the Poetry Foundation

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of Poetry magazine, has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audience. In the coming year, the Foundation will launch a major new poetry website and sponsor an unprecedented study to understand poetry's place in American culture. Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, Poetry is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Harriet Monroe's "Open Door" policy, set forth in Volume I of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of Poetry's mission: to print the best poetry written today, in whatever style, genre, or approach.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts – both new and established – bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

About the Arizona Commission on the Arts

As the state arts agency, the Arizona Commission on the Arts envisions an Arizona where all people can:

broaden, deepen and diversify their engagement with the arts,
as creators, audiences and supporters,
in ways that are satisfying and integral to their lives.

[PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST]

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